



Finger Pickin' Flash

eRic Luplow—Collision of Colors

Where: Beyond Arts Gallery, 114 North A Street, Harlingen
When: Through April 21
Hours: Tues by Appt., 1pm-5pm Wed-Fri, 10am -5pm Sat
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Sur-FolkÔ

This artist logs his life with a lighthearted style

eRic Luplow considers his watercolors to cross the line between Surrealism and folk art, and he has labeled them as “Sur-FolkÔ.” Currently on display at Beyond Arts Gallery, his Sur-FolkÔ works record and express thoughts and life experiences with a lively figurative style and an emphasis on vivid color. Luplow hails from Truchas, a small Spanish village in northern New Mexico, and has been documenting his thoughts and activities, as well as those of friends, with colors that reflect the New Mexico color aesthetic. Frames and mats rejoice along with the images they contain. “I just love color,” exclaimed Luplow, “and being a watercolor artist, it’s real easy to work with. I’ve worked with watercolor my whole life - the summertime with its oranges and reds, and the turquoise sky up there, winter or summer. Yeah, that inspires me.”

Although Luplow identifies with Surrealism and folk art, I tend to see his shapes as having a kinship to contemporary graphic narrative styles. He has created an angular style that effectively conveys his take on life. In this collection of work, his decidedly playful style comes

across as definitely a mood lifter. Depictions of surroundings and ideas rise above the self-consciousness of Surrealism and the often-stressful earnestness of folk art

and, instead, take us on a pleasant and insightful journey. The straightforward figurative style seems specifically crafted to express a variety of personalities. The guy in "Further Roaming" obviously prefers different adventures from those sought by the rosy-cheeked skier in "XC Ecstasy." But Luplow's style is unified; the angular figures and flat color shapes woven with threads of humor and perception project personal clarity. "Boulder by Bus," is his commentary on a trip to see the Dead playing in Colorado and features a Volkswagen bus flanked by several buffaloes. "I dig buffalo," offered Luplow. Another painting depicts the animal playing a guitar.

His watercolor technique developed out of convenience and necessity. While working as an industrial electrician, he would go job site to job site with his watercolors. "Watercolor was the easiest to work with on the road," he explained; "I know how it's going to act. And with the beauty of watercolor, I may start a painting or a sketch and I can cut it down if I think it's too big or isn't working. That's the beauty of a media that will let you do that." His dry brush technique allows applying the maximum amount of pigment to the paper, giving body to the work. "Further Roaming" is a good example of this effect with its saturated purple, crimson, and yellow-orange inlay along with varying tones of turquoise blues and greens.

In a rare political commentary, "Around the Bend" shows a free-spirited guy on a tricycle just trying to get out of town. The road is bending ahead of him in front of an unsettling sky. "He's hoping that when he gets around the bend it gets a little better than it is right now," said Luplow. "I'm just hoping around the bend will be better."

Nancy Moyer, Professor Emerita of Art from UTRGV, is an art critic for The Monitor. She may be reached at nmoyer@rgv.rr.com